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AUTHOR Yager, Geoffrey G.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This paper, directed to beginning counselors who have not experienced counseling supervision, discusses the general purpose of supervision and the relationship between the supervisor and trainee. Five supervision models are described: (1) direct teaching; (2) therapeutic; (3) interpersonal process recall; (4) self-supervision; and (5) consultative. Suggestions are offered on ways the counselor trainee can obtain the most benefits from the supervisory experience and from relationships with the supervisor. (JAC)

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TIPS FOR THE INEXPERIENCED COUNSELOR; HOW TO MAXIMIZE YOUR TIME IN SUPERVISION

Geoffrey G. Yager, Mary V. Witham
George T. Williams, Carol E. Scheufler

University of Cincinnati

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for Counselor Education and Supervision
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Tips for the Inexperienced Counselor: How to Maximize Your Time in Supervision

This paper is directed to beginning counselors -- those individuals who have not yet experienced counseling supervision. Why then are we presenting this paper at a North Central Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (NCACES) meeting where we are likely to find only experienced counselors and counselor educators in attendance? Basically, we hope that these supervisors of beginning counseling trainees may, perhaps, bring home this accumulation of ideas on supervision and share them with their supervisees.

We could organize and integrate our "tips on supervision" in any number of ways. After considerable debate, we have determined that it would be easiest to write if we listed these ideas for you.

1. Know the general purpose of supervision.

The obvious starting point to help you maximize your supervision time is to give you a definition of supervision. Counselor supervision is defined as the process by which counselor trainees and/or practicing counseling professionals receive information, feedback, and support relative to maximizing their effectiveness in helping their clients make positive life changes. Although counselor supervision is often restrictively regarded as the meetings that counselors schedule with their administrative superiors for evaluation of their work, our present definition is more expansive -- allowing many informal, yet professional, relationships to be classified as supervision. In fact our generalized definition also allows self-evaluation and self-directed learning as a viable form of counseling supervision.

2. Recognize that different supervisors will attempt to achieve supervision's purposes in different ways.

All supervisors will approach their supervisory role in an individual manner. Although admittedly simplistic, we can describe for you five rather basic supervisory approaches (Yager & Littrell, 1978). Your supervisor may not exactly fit any one of the five models, but it is likely that most supervisors would tend to prefer one model over the others. As a supervisee, it is to your advantage to be able to determine the preferred model of your potential supervisors before supervision.

Briefly, the five supervision models include:

Direct Teaching Model - Supervisors determine the content and direction of the supervision and teach the counselors the content, behavior or attitudes that they perceive are most needed to aid the client. The supervisors essentially

communicates "Here is my list of observations, let me expand and clarify how each might aid your development as a counselor." (Yager & Littrell, 1978, pp. 2-3)

Therapeutic Model - Supervisors focus upon the dynamics, e.g., feelings, thoughts, internal motivations of the relationship between counselor and client and between counselor and supervisor. Supervisors in this model tend to say: "Let's talk about your feelings and reactions ..... how does that feeling relate to what's happening right now between you and me ..... can you go a little deeper on that?"

Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) Model-Supervisors using Kagan's IPR process (Kagan, Schauble, Resnikoff, Danish, Krathwahl, 1969) ask their supervisees to watch videotaped replays of their counseling sessions as stimuli to help them vividly recall their thoughts and feelings. The IPR process is similar in focus to the Therapeutic Supervision Model, but it differs significantly in that the IPR supervisor carefully avoids building a relationship with the supervisee: Advice, interpretations, immediacy, and self-disclosure are prohibited. IPR supervisors tell supervisees: "Let's talk about the thoughts and feelings that the videotape helps you to remember. I will ask questions to stimulate your recall, but the answers are solely left up to you."

Self-supervision Model - Self-supervision is a self-initiated activity intended to increase counseling effectiveness. A synposis of a self-supervisor's self-thoughts might be: "Given my self-assessment, I need to develop skills, attitudes, or knowledge in the following areas. What can I do to help myself develop in the manner needed?"

Consultative Model - Supervisors in a consultative model are more difficult to describe than those following other models. The characteristic aspect of such supervision is a colleague to colleague relationship that allows for mutual determination tion of the content and focus of supervision. At any given point in consultative supervision, we might observe therapeutic-like behaviors or IPR or direct teaching, but in each case these behaviors would have been mutually desired by supervisor and supervisee. Consultative supervisors essentially say: "Let's talk about what we'll do in supervision today. We'll decide what issues we'll spend time on and how we'll move to address those issues."

Table 1 is taken from Yager and Littrell's (1978) analysis of these five supervisory models. The table gives ratings of the extent to which each of nine possible criteria for effective supervision are addressed by each of the five "pure" supervisory models.

3. Accept that some anxiety in supervision is unavoidable.

As a beginning counselor, you will feel anxious about your supervisory sessions. As accepting, encouraging and respectful as your supervisor may be, you will feel that you are being

evaluated and this will create discomfort. Awareness of this reality in advance reduces some of the "anxiety about being anxious", and you will find it a bit easier to deal with the supervision.

4. Recognize that trust in your supervisor may well be the most important aspect of your supervision relationship.

None of the five models given above has any overwhelming edge on the trust dimension. We could point to very effective supervisors whose preferred model fit each of the five possibilities we have listed. In analyzing the variety of such individuals, the one feature appears to be that each is "trusted". Trust of course, is many faceted. It includes at least these important dimensions: a) "Credibility" Trust - a supervisee's belief that the supervisor is a competent counselor with appropriate skills, b) "Good Faith" Trust - a supervisee's assurance that the supervisor will not "put down" the supervisee for a lack of knowledge, for a poor performance, or for an unusual value or attitude, c) "Personal Respect" Trust - a supervisee understnading that feedback from the supervisor will be communicated with understanding and caring, d) "Honesty" Trust - a supervisee's confidence that issues related to counseling performance will be raised by the supervisor despite possible discomfort on the part of either participant in the supervision, e) "Constancy" Trust - a supervisee's certainty that the supervisor will behave consistently from one session to another, from one topic to another, and f) "Flexibility" Trust - a supervisee's assuredness that, no matter what his or her counseling orientation or academic background, the supervisor will avoid rigidity in approaching the supervisee's learning. All of these aspects of trust must fit within the supervisor's basic trust in the supervisee: supervisors need to believe that the trainees with whom they work can and will learn appropriate helping behaviors.

Trust is a two-way communication. In an openly trusting relationship, the trainee would be expected to say, "I disagree" equally as often as the supervisor. You, as a beginning counselor, have the right to expect a trusting supervisory relationship!

5. Clarify for yourself what you most need from supervision:

We would not assume that all trainees require the same learnings from supervision. Analyze your present skills, attitudes, and knowledge and determine what you need to learn about yourself as a counselor and your skills as a counselor. Your list of necessary learning objectives will undoubtedly grow and change as you work with clients and supervisors. Your advanced assessment can, nonetheless, help you clarify your initial direction within supervision. Generally, you know best what you need.

6. Ask your supervisor for help with growth in the areas of your identified needs:

As important as all of our "tips on supervision" may be, this

is probably the most crucial. You have the right to ask your supervisor for the type of supervision you feel you need. The supervisor, of course, has the right to refuse to honor your request. In such a case, you may well have the option of seeking out a new supervisor. Most often, however, the discussion that you would initiate in asking for certain supervision learnings would be likely to help clarify and enrich your supervisory relationship. Supervisors may on occasion respond in ways that are not immediately understandable. When you ask for an explanation, you may find yourself convinced that the previously unexplained supervisor behavior is aimed at helping you learn something important. Certainly in exploring such an issue, you and the supervisor would not only be clarifying the purposes of your supervision, but also would be building a more open and trusting relationship.

Assertive supervisees, such as yourself, are probably more difficult for supervisors, but those very same supervisees are the most interesting and exciting! A challenging supervisee will often push the supervisor to new learning as well.

7. Clarify your contract with your supervisor with respect to the content of your meetings.

At the conclusion of your discussion with your supervisor relating to your desired goals for supervision, you should create as specific a contract as you can concerning what will happen in supervision. Will supervision focus primarily upon your dynamics? Supervisor feedback? IPR? Do you know what will be expected of you both within your counseling and your supervisory sessions? Should you bring audio or videotapes of your counseling? All of these questions (and more) can be eliminated through a clear contract (probably a verbal contract).

8. If you are unable to select your supervisor, make an honest effort to adjust your learning to fit the supervisor's style.

If you cannot choose your own supervisor, you still must determine the model that your supervisor prefers. Based upon the supervisor's model, you will need to determine whether you can alter your own behaviors to fit the supervisor's preference (i.e., can you meet your needs within the supervisor's approach?) Flexibility is not only a positive quality in your supervisor, it is also a helpful asset for you, the supervisee. Obviously, fighting the supervisor's model will not be productive. Such activity will create distrust between you and your supervisor, and this distrust will tend to reduce increasingly the potential learning in supervision. If you cannot accommodate yourself to the supervisor's approach, you should do whatever you can to arrange for a new supervisor.

9. Within supervision, be as honest and as open as possible.

   Enter supervision with the expectation that it will be necessary for you to be as self-disclosing as you can. The more of yourself you can explore, the more open you will be to learn new approaches. Acknowledge your strengths and weaknesses and be ready to work hard in the exploration of both areas.

10. Recognize that your need for supervision is not eliminated when you graduate and/or become an "experienced" counselor.

    As we have defined it, counselor supervision is an on-going and unending process. At minimum, we must continue to evaluate our own counseling and work toward increasing our skills. Generally, however, discussing client cases with other professionals can provide even the most experienced counselor with ideas or approaches that would not have been identified otherwise. Experienced counselors may well be more skilled than beginners, but they never approach perfection. We always can benefit from the assessment and learning that are part of any counselor supervisory process!

Table 1

Ratings of Five "Pure" Models of Supervision
on Nine Important Dimensions of a Supervisory Relationship

Dimensions (Criteria) for Effective Supervision	Direct Teaching Model	Therapeutic Model	Interpersonal Process Recall Model	Self-Supervision Model	Consultative Model
Building trust through supervisory relationship	0	+	0	NA	0
Dealing with Counselor's personal feelings	-	+	+	+	0
Conveying information relevant to specific skills or strategies	+	-	-	0	+
Employing limited supervisory time efficiently	+	-	-	+	-
Clarifying goals and directions of supervision	+	-	-	0	+
Transmitting directly ideas, opinions, and feelings of the supervisor	+	-	-	+	+
Communicating on a peer-to-peer basis	-	-	NA	NA	+
Allowing counselor to direct meetings and set focus	-	-	-	+	+
Providing flexibility to allow application with supervisors who are not extensively trained	-	-	0	0	0

Key to Ratings

+ = this dimension and its fulfillment are seen as strengths of this model

0 = this dimension is relatively irrelevant to this model--the model neither sees this as a strength or a weakness

- = this dimension and its lack of fulfillment are seen as weaknesses of this model

NA = this dimension is irrelevant to this model

Taken from Yager & Luttrell, 1978, pp. 6-7

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